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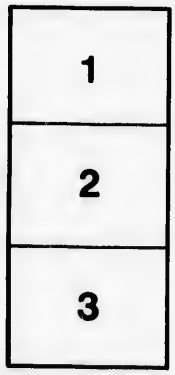

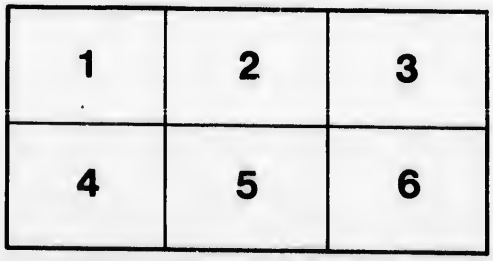

THE REDEMPTION OF FREETOWN

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THE REDEMPTION OF FREETOWN.

The Redemption of Freetown

BY CHARLES M. SHELDON

Author of "In His Steps," "The Crucifixion of Phillip Strong," "His Brother's Keeper," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," "Richard Bruce," "The Twentieth Door," Overcoming The World,' etc.

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PREFACE.

The Redemption of Freetown is the story of actual conditions in hundreds of cities in Christian America. I have written it in hopes that the reading of it may lead to actual *church* settlements, such as are entirely possible. There are hundreds of churches abundantly able to endow and carry on social settlements in various neglected slum quarters of our cities. If the young men and women who have been willing to do as Jesus would do would actually go and live (under the direction of wise leadership) in the social settlements that the churches could create, it would mark a movement in the Christian service of the world that would change and redeem many a dark spot in many a city of our country. This also is my prayer, for the young people in my own Endeavor society and for thousands all over the world.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

THE REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON, D.D. whose name is a household word from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and whose writings have been read in more than half a million homes, was born in the town of Wellsville, New York, in the year 1857.

His boyhood days were spent on a farm in Dakota. Naturally fond of reading, he spent all his spare moments in studying the best literature, and "When he entered college he had probably read more of the standard works of the day than nine-tenths of college graduates."

He graduated from Phillips Academy, at Andover, Mass., in 1879, from Brown University, in 1883; and from Andover Theological Seminary, in 1886. For two years he was pastor of a Congregational church

in Waterbury, Vermont, and in 1889, he accepted a call to Central Church, Topeka, Kansas, where he has since resided, and where he is now doing a good work.

He is forty-one years of age, tall, large, blue-eyed, brown-haired, brainy, gentle in manner, and deliberate in speech.

"He began story-writing when on the farm in Dakota, sitting down with the family where everything was going on, talking, working, and all the rest, in the one room which served as kitchen, dining-room, sitting-room, parlor, and study, and with his pencil and paper would scribble away, and his story, thus made up, would appear in the Yankton weekly paper."

Bishop John H. Vincent, who is a neighbor of Mr. Sheldon, in the city of Topeka, Kansas, writes of his fellow-townsman as follows:

"His personal efforts to find out what Jesus would do if He lived in our age;

his fidelity as a pastor, a preacher and reformer; his activity and aggressiveness on week-days as on Sundays; his wise and winning way of preaching the Gospel through his stories, which he reads by chapters as sermons to his Sunday evening congregations; his kindergarten work in his own church, and in another part of the town among the little negroes; the impression made by his own spiritual and earnest personality—all prepare me to read what he writes with the conviction ever present that the hand that writes these things is moved by a heart to whom these things are living verities."

Mr. Sheldon's entrance into the field of religious fiction, came about in a singular manner. In the fall of 1891, he was pondering over the problem of how to fill his church on Sunday evenings. He was puzzled. He said to himself, "How far would you go to hear yourself preach? Suppose

you lived four or five blocks from a church, had a good room, an easy-chair, an interesting book or a Sunday paper, and it was uncomfortable weather, and you felt a little tired and under no obligation to go to church because you were not a member—supposing all that, what would have to be the character of a Sunday evening service to draw you out of that chair and away from that book or paper out into a disagreeable night to walk four blocks to a church?"

Finally he hit upon a solution. He determined to throw his teaching for the winter into the form of a serial story, reading one chapter at each Sunday evening service. The scheme worked well. After hearing the first chapter, the house was packed with people eager to follow the fortunes of the characters described.

The first story published was "Richard Bruce," which was followed by "Robert

Hardy," "The Twentieth Door," "The Crucifixion of Phillip Strong," "His Brother's Keeper," then "In His Steps," and "Overcoming the World, the Story of Malcom Kirk."

Speaking of the success of this unique method of preaching the Gospel, Mr. Sheldon says:

"I may say as part of my experience, that I have enlarged my definition of the sermon to mean almost any conveyance by means of which whatever is Christian truth to me goes from me into the daily life of my people."

The "*Ram's Horn*" has this to say:

"Mr. Sheldon is an end-of-the-century, up-to-date man in every phase of his character. He has long urged the establishment of a Christian daily newspaper. He spent a week as a reporter on a daily paper to get an inside knowledge of modern journalism. He spent a week on the railroad,

jolting along on caboose and freight car, to study the life of a railroad man. He dwelt many weeks in the slums of Chicago, and other great cities, learning how the other half lives.

"Mr. Sheldon is a reformer and a prophet. He is a man ahead of his time. He has a great message for his generation, and has shown rare judgment in selecting fiction as the channel through which to convey it."

Mr. Sheldon has had repeated requests for interviews which would explain to the public his motive in writing the story entitled, "In His Steps," his method of composition, the effect of the story on people's lives, and the probable outcome. In a letter to a friend Mr. Sheldon says:

"In every case I have refused these requests, because it seemed to me like an unnecessary thing to do. But what you have

asked me for is different. There are certain facts in connection with the little story that belong to the churches and the public. It is a fact that the idea embodied in the message has been coincident with the thought of very many readers of the story, and the result has been a natural quickening into spiritual life of a Christian faith that has not heretofore been expressed in terms of living application to the world's needs.

"I am not at liberty to make public the many letters that have come to me relating to the story; but nearly every letter contains the question, 'Do you think it is possible to do as Jesus would do?' With this, in nearly every case, is the longing expressed that it *might* be possible, and that the story might come true. There has been revealed in these letters from ministers and laymen of all the denominations a hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of the kingdom that speaks with great hope-

fulness for the Christian discipleship of the future.

"I do not feel as if my personal connection with the message in the book has any right to be thrust into the facts relating to the reception of that message by the readers of it. That is the reason I have wished to avoid any personal interview about the story. The Lord has blessed the use of it. Many churches and Endeavor societies have taken the pledge to live by the question, 'What would Jesus do in my place?' In many cases men and women have been brought into the Christian life by reading the story, and many persons have changed their business lives and the conduct of their entire programme of activity in the social and religious world through the reception of the message into their daily walk with the Master. It is my daily prayer that the Christian discipleship of the churches may be made alive by a closer walk with the Christ, and old forms and customs that

have no meaning in our churches and our lives may be swept away by the wind of the Holy Spirit, who shall take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us."

"That letter," says his friend, "reveals something of the spirit of the man. 'He is a real man.' He has a strong, sensitive, sympathetic personality. Mrs. Sheldon has been an invalid for years, and the loving care and service that have been given have softened and sweetened the spirit of the strong man so that you feel, as you look into his face, that here is a brother man who has suffered and who can sympathize. There is a touch of sadness about the face, or perhaps a better word would be seriousness. He does not take the world lightly.

"His success has not elated him. Rather, it seems to me, that in the year since I last saw him, it has humbled him, as he has come to realize more keenly the unsatisfied longing of multitudes for the Christ,

and their failure to find Him in the place where He promised to be, the lives of His disciples.

"His kindergarten work in connection with his church, which occupies a building erected for that purpose by a lady, as a memorial of her little daughter, reveals his love for the children. His heartiest support has always been given to every effort to reach the unchurched. He believes in putting the saving leaven of consecrated, Christ-filled lives into the neglected quarters of our great cities.

"Mr. Sheldon's life and writings show that he believes in the gospel of life; that Christ is in the world to-day in His disciples, and that the judgment scene in Matt. 25:31-46 should be interpreted literally, and not so spiritualized as to destroy its application to the life that now is."

Mr. Sheldon is intensely interested in the practical application of the gospel to

the needs of the people, as will be found from the reading of "The Redemption of Freetown."

I.

THE PROBLEM OF FREETOWN.

THE ESCAPE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROBLEM OF FREETOWN.

It was very still in the district courtroom. The jury had just brought in a verdict of guilty, and the judge was about to pronounce the sentence.

The room was filled with the usual crowd of spectators. The lawyers occupied the space railed off from the raised seats at the rear where the public were admitted. All whispers and noise on the part of witnesses, attorneys, and court officers had ceased, and every eye was on the man who had just been pronounced guilty.

"Prisoner at the bar," said Judge Vernon, leaning a little forward in his chair until his arm rested on the desk in front of him, "have you anything to say why sentence should not be pronounced upon you?"

The prisoner was a young negro not more than twenty years old. He had been stand-

ing when the verdict of the jury was given. His hand rests on the back of a chair, and he faced the judge with a look of stolid, sullen defiance.

"I've got only this to say, judge. The shooting was accidental. If I 'd had a fair trial, I 'd been let off. But everything's been against me here."

There was a pause while the man passed the back of his hand over his mouth and shifted his position nervously.

Judge Vernon waited a moment.

"Is that all you have to say?"

"That's all, unless—I think I ought to have another trial. I don't count this fair, judge."

"You have been fully and fairly tried," replied the judge firmly. Then, after a moment of silence, he continued: "Prisoner at the bar, I sentence you to the penitentiary for twenty years. Bailiff, remove the prisoner. Call the next case."

The prisoner made a movement as if he

intended to utter a word, but his lawyer behind him pulled him down into a seat; the bailiff came to the little gate of the railing and beckoned to the prisoner, who was led out. The machinery of the court went on, the next case was called, and the usual stir of the courtroom rose again, in sharp contrast with the moment's intense stillness that had just preceded.

The evening of that same day, as Judge Vernon sat down to dinner in his residence up on the boulevard, his wife noticed an unusual seriousness in his face. She did not speak of it at once, however.

"Where is Claude?" the judge asked, as his wife and two girls took their places at the table. They all remained standing, for the judge held to the custom which his father before him had observed, of waiting until every member of his family was present before sitting down to the table.

"He was invited out to a card-party at the Carltons," said Mrs. Vernon, slowly.

The judge frowned, but said nothing. They all sat down, and Mrs. Vernon looked carefully across the table at her husband. It was then that she spoke of his look of care, greater, it seemed to her, than usual.

"Have you had a trying day, John?" asked Mrs. Vernon, a little timidly. She did not often venture to question her husband about his duties as judge.

"Yes," Judge Vernon answered, almost curtly. Then he looked across at his wife, and went on in a different tone. "The fact is, Eliza, the condition of affairs out at Freetown is getting desperate. To-day I sentenced one of the boys from that district to twenty years for a shooting affray. That makes over fifteen criminal cases from that neighborhood in two weeks. Crime and rowdyism of every description seem to be on the increase there."

"Why don't you double up your sentences, father?" asked one of the girls, a pretty, stylishly dressed young woman.

Judge Vernon looked at her, and smiled slightly.

"I'm afraid that doubling the sentences is not the cure for the crimes committed. In fact, Isabel, I am afraid that the heavier the sentence, the more the convicted criminals are regarded as heroes by their companions and so regard themselves."

"There ought to be some law to prevent the dreadful state of things in Freetown," said Winifred, the other girl, a little younger than her sister. "Claude was telling me the other day that the hardest, worst elements in the city are crowded into Freetown, and that it isn't safe to walk through it after midnight. Just think of it! Right near the best residence part of the city, too. I think there ought to be a law compelling those folks to sell out to the white people!" continued Winifred, whose ideas of law were somewhat vague and general.

"I 'm afraid they are there to stay," said Judge Vernon, absently. He seemed to

be brooding over something, and even the light-minded Isabel was afraid to interrupt her somewhat stern father when he looked that way. He did not speak for some time, and then, as the girls were talking over a theatre party to be formed for an evening of that week, Judge Vernon suddenly asked about his son.

"Has Claude finished that writing I gave him to do?" he asked his wife.

Mrs. Vernon looked down at the table, as she answered in a low voice, "He has not touched it yet."

Judge Vernon looked angry. "Send him into the library when he comes in," he said. He rose abruptly, and went into a little room adjoining the library, used for a private reading-room by himself.

Isabel and Winifred looked at each other. The look said very plainly, "I'm glad I'm not in Claude's place."

After supper Isabel went to the piano, and Winifred took up a book. Mrs. Ver-

non sat down to some fancy-work. The evening passed on slowly. It was an unusual thing for the girls to be at home. At last they went up to their rooms, and Mrs. Vernon sat on by her beautiful lamp, apparently deeply interested in her work. But she was thinking of her son, and was not happy. Often she lifted her head to listen, while the fingers ceased to be busy, and as often she dropped her head again and went on. The night was very still, and it seemed impossible that events were rapidly shaping which would before morning change the lives of more than one person in the city of Merton.

The prisoner had been taken at once from the courtroom to the county jail. He had been put in the cage where a dozen other criminals were confined. He had at once gone to a corner, and remained there in sullen silence, refusing to talk with any one. The day had drawn to a close. The lights in the corridors had been turned on,

supper had been served, and most of the men who had been walking about in the cage had gone into their cells.

The jailer suddenly came down a short flight of stone steps that led from the detention-room, and, unlocking the cage, called out, "Burke Williams!"

At first there was no answer. Then the figure of the negro arose and came towards the door.

"What do you want?" the prisoner asked in a surly voice.

"Come out here!" called the jailer, roughly. "And keep a civil tongue. You're wanted up in the detention-room. Quick, now! Move along!"

The prisoner came out, and the jailer locked the door, and, taking out the keys, shoved the man along the short corridor towards the flight of steps. The negro purposely delayed his going as much as possible.

"Move along!" cried the jailer. The

prisoner pretended to stumble, and the jailer roughly caught hold of his arm and pulled him forward. At the same instant, as quick as lightning, the prisoner seized the jailer and with the exercise of all his young strength threw him heavily upon the floor. The jailer's head struck on the corner of the stone steps, and he lay there stunned.

With a rapidity that seemed impossible from his awkward movements before, the prisoner snatched the keys where the jailer had let them fall, and with one bound was up the stone steps and in the detention-room. This opened from the jailer's office, and that had a door opening directly on the street.

There was one man in the detention-office, and he had risen and was near the door leading to the guard-room. The prisoner saw in an instant that it was the attorney who had conducted his case. He had come to have an interview with refer-

ence to some part of the case relating to a motion for a new trial. In special cases prisoners were allowed to confer with visitors in the detention-room.

The negro dashed through the room before the astonished attorney could stop him. The jailer's door was locked, but from the bunch of keys the prisoner chanced to choose the right one first. He thrust it into the lock, turned the bolt just as the bewildered lawyer rushed upon him, opened the door, shut it, and, bracing his excited strength upon it, locked it again.

He was outdoors and for the moment free. He could hear the uproar from within the jail as the assistant jailer and a companion rushed into the office from the corridors where they had been busy clearing up the prisoners' supper things.

It was just at this moment that Judge Vernon sat down to dinner.

II.

JUDGE VERNON'S TROUBLE.

CLAUDE VERNON'S RETURN.

CHAPTER II.

JUDGE VERNON'S TROUBLE.

The escaped prisoner looked up and down the street an instant, and then leaped across the short distance between the rock-pile yard and the alley. A man on the other side of the street, attracted by the unusual uproar in the jail, ran across just in time to see the figure of the negro escaping up the alley. He disappeared in the dusk before the man could determine which way he had turned when reaching the end of the block.

The city lay about him in the gathering night. He knew that it would be some time before the jail could be opened, as all the doors were now locked and heavy bars closed every window. But the alarm would soon be given to officers on the outside, and the pursuit would be swift and thorough.

In his sullen rage he determined to seek refuge in his old haunts in Freetown. The police would surely seek him there, but so they would everywhere. Skulking close to buildings, dodging up alleys, seeking every spot of darkest shadow, the man made his way rapidly toward the district which had grown notorious in the criminal history of the city. As he ran, his sinful heart beat alternately with anger at the justice that pursued him, and with coarse joy at his temporary escape from it.

A little after ten o'clock Judge Vernon came into the sitting-room where his wife still sat with her fancy-work. He walked back and forth several times without saying a word. At last he stopped and sat down by the table.

"Eliza, what shall we do about Claude? He is simply making a wreck of his life the way he is living."

"I know it." The mother's fingers

trembled as she rested them on the work in her lap.

"It was only yesterday that I learned of his drinking at these parties to which he goes so often. What are the fathers and mothers of Merton thinking of, that they allow their boys to learn these habits in the best society?" Judge Vernon spoke with a force that lost sight, for the time, of the fact that he himself was one of the very fathers that he so severely condemned.

"Do you think it is the best society, John?" asked Mrs. Vernon with a boldness that was not a part of her character.

"No! And yet we say we belong to it. And we let our girls and Claude frequent these entertainments night after night. Eliza, I cannot endure it any longer. The thought of Claude's growing into the wild, dissipated, society fast young man is a horror to me." Judge Vernon paused, and then went on with an unusual agitation in his voice and manner. "Eliza, I have not

been able to shut out the picture, since I heard of Claude's drinking, of his appearance in court, in *my* court some day, charged with some crime. That picture has haunted me all day. While I was sentencing that colored man, I kept thinking, 'What is to prevent Claude, my own son, from standing here some day, here or in some court, charged with some crime while under the influence of drink, just as the negro committed his crime while under the influence of liquor?'"

"Oh, John, don't talk so!" Mrs. Vernon let her work fall on the floor, and her face was pale and her lips quivered nervously. She had never known her husband to break out so forcibly from his habitual stern repression of feeling, and it frightened her.

"It is simply what we must face sooner or later. Our girls—." The judge crowded down a rising passion, and for a moment there was perfect silence in the

room. "Each of our girls one of these days will marry one of these society young men, such men as I am free to confess I never would choose for them."

Mrs. Vernon was silent. She was astonished at her husband's words.

"I see things in my court, Eliza, that convince me daily of the need of a great transformation in the city of Merton in its social life. I am simply appalled at the number of divorce cases. I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that the fast life lived by so many of the young people is utterly ruinous to soul and body. Hardly a case comes up that does not illustrate in some form the terrible influence of drink and gambling, much of it learned at the very parties where Claude is a frequent guest, at the very party, no doubt, where he is now."

He rose and walked up and down the room again. Mrs. Vernon sat silent and agitated.

"And I cannot help thinking of the people in Freetown. In the very heart of our Christian (as we call it) city there is a condition of lawlessness and impurity that very few realize. I see the results of it daily in my court, and my heart grows sick as I feel my powerlessness. Somehow—" Judge Vernon turned to his wife with a look and manner she had never known in him before, "Eliza, somehow I cannot help connecting the crime in Freetown, the dissipation and immorality in that district, with the same thing in what we call our best society. Somehow I am oppressed by the feeling that this city will suffer some great calamity even in its best homes because we have allowed such evils to grow up uncorrected in the right way. It seems to me sometimes as I sit in my place on the bench that a judgment is hanging over this city, so fair in its outward appearance, yet so wrong in much of its human life."

John Vernon, judge of the district court,

had been a man who all his life gave the impression, even to the members of his own family, that he was a stern, self-controlled person, whose emotions were held in check with almost Puritan or Spartan coldness. His wife wondered in her heart at the unusual exhibition of his feeling this evening. Finally she asked, "The prisoner you sentenced to-day, John,—he is one of a large class, do you think?"

"More than half the crime that is committed in the city comes from that class of young men."

"And you sentenced him to twenty years' imprisonment?"

"Yes; it was a brutal shooting affair. The other negro was lamed for life. Will probably lose an arm and foot."

"It is horrible, as you say. I do not see what we are coming to. But I do not see what connection there can be between the condition of things among the negroes in

Freetown and that of the white people in the society we know."

Judge Vernon did not answer at once. Then he said: "Crime and immorality never can be confined to one spot in a city. They spread like contagion. In fact, they spread worse than disease, for we can restrain and shut in disease, but vice, until it becomes crime, may go unchecked anywhere. There is a sure contamination from Freetown spreading through the entire city, and I cannot escape the feeling that the best families in the place are in danger. Our own, perhaps. And really, Eliza, when you consider the superior training and advantages of the white race, have we very much to boast of when our own young men and women grow up to be drunkards and gamblers and unloving husbands and wives?"

He had risen again, and was nervously walking up and down. The clock struck

the half-hour. The sound had only died away when the door-bell rung.

The judge walked into the hall and opened the outer door.

"It's you, Mr. Douglass? Come in."

"It is late to make a call, judge," said a deep, strong voice. "But I was just getting home from the meeting of the Christian Citizens' League; and, seeing a light, I thought I would just stop a moment. Have you heard the news from the jail?"

The Rev. Howard Douglass came into the hall, and Mrs. Vernon, who had risen and gone out there, greeted him.

"No; what news?"

"The negro, Burke Williams, has escaped, and is now at liberty. He assaulted the jailer, and succeeded in locking the door on the officers in the jail. The police are hunting for him now."

Judge Vernon listened in a greater degree of excitement than he had shown even during his conversation with his wife.

"Come in here, Mr. Douglass. If you can spare the time, I should like to talk over matters in Freetown. We are waiting for Claude to come home. This news of Williams adds to the thought I have been having lately about the people in Freetown."

Howard Douglass hesitated.

"It is rather late. But I am specially interested in the conditions over there. In fact, the matter of what to do with Freetown was the main subject of discussion at our League meeting to-night. Something ought to be done over there, or we shall have a heavy account to answer for at last, when the deeds of the body are summed up for judgment. The Christian people of Merton will be held largely responsible, I believe, for failure to help Christianize that spot."

"I begin to believe the same," replied Judge Vernon gravely.

He had paused thoughtfully with the

evident purpose of going on to propose some plan, when they were startled by the sound of many heavy steps coming up the veranda walk.

Before the persons outside could ring the bell, Judge Vernon had flung the door open. Mrs. Vernon and Douglass stood close behind him. Looking out on the lighted veranda, they saw a group of men, among them two police officers, and, carried on some rude couch in the midst of the group, lay the form of a man covered with a blanket.

One of the officers addressed Judge Vernon.

"Judge, this is a hard piece of news to bring you. In hunting for Burke Williams we found your son Claude lying near the end of Free Street, wounded and unconscious. That fiend Burke probably did it. He is robbed."

Mrs. Vernon pressed through between her husband and all the others.

"Claude, my son! Is he dead?"

"No, ma'am," replied the officer, as he took off his hat. But he added in a lower tone as the terrified mother drew the blanket from the face of her boy, "No, not yet."

III.

HOWARD DOUGLASS'S PLAN.

"HAVE YO HEARD THE NEWS?"

CHAPTER III.

HOWARD DOUGLASS'S PLAN.

It was Sunday morning at Merton after an unusually exciting week. And, as the Rev. Howard Douglass went into his pulpit and thoughtfully looked at the large congregation that crowded the church, his mind was filled with one idea, and that idea was the redemption of Freetown.

He had just come from Judge Vernon's. He had prayed in the room where Claude Vernon lay, his young life wavering on the border-land of that other country, where death is forever shut out, but where judgment still is potent; and with the memory of that still, white face the minister faced his people.

He had been spending the entire week in gathering materials for his sermon, and the escape of the prisoner from the jail, the assault on Claude Vernon, the son of the

judge, and the uncertainty of the prisoner's whereabouts, together with the flickering life of the young man, formed a natural climax to what the minister had prepared. It had been a long time since a sermon in Merton had produced such a sensation. Yet it was quietly delivered, was full of figures, and was not sensational in the common use of the word.

"What have we ever done to redeem Freetown?" asked Howard Douglas, after giving the people a look at the place, fortified by undisputed facts as to its needs. "It lies in the midst of a Christian city practically uncared for. It is cursed and feared and criticised for the vice and crime that flow out of it. But how much have the Christian people of this town ever done to check or remove the source of that evil? How much money have we ever spent over there? How much time have we ever given from our receptions and parties and

entertainments to teach Freetown the way to eternal life?

"I am unable to escape the burden of personal responsibility whenever I pass through this place. I believe the Judge of all the earth will condemn the Christian disciples of Merton in the last great day if they do not give up their endless round of pleasure-seeking and waste of God's wealth, and personally throw the strength of their lives into the solution of this problem.

"How shall we redeem Freetown? It is not an impossibility. It is not a vague dream of what may be. It is within the reach of actual facts. It can be redeemed. The place can be saved, even as a soul by itself can be saved by Jesus. But it is God's way to save men by means of other men. He does not save by means of angels, or in any way apart from the use of men as the means. What will you do to redeem Freetown? I have a plan. I want you to listen to it."

He then rapidly sketched his plan. People all over the church leaned forward and nodded in assent, but for the most part there was simply a fixed attention that did not at once show that it had reached the minister's conclusions.

The sermon was over, the last hymn sung, the benediction pronounced, and people were going out of the church.

As they went out, they were talking over the minister's plan for redeeming Freetown.

"What do you think of it?" asked Deacon Culver of his neighbor, the Hon. William Brooks. Mr. Brooks was one of the most talented lawyers in Merton.

"I think it is largely visionary. Mr. Douglass is enthusiastic and of an imaginative temperament. But he does not take everything into the account. I doubt if he can make his plan work."

"At the same time something ought to be done, don't you think?" asked the dea-

con, a little timidly, for he had a very great respect for his neighbor's great legal attainments.

"O, no question about the need," replied Mr. Brooks somewhat impatiently. "But whether what Mr. Douglass proposes will do anything or not, is a question."

"Don't you think we ought to give it a trial, at least? It is better to try something than let matters continue as they are at present. We are none of us safe. What is to prevent your boy or mine from meeting the same experience as Claude Vernon?"

"I hear that he was under the influence of liquor at the time he was assaulted. It is said he walked home through Freetown to save time, but that he would never have done it if he had been sober," said Mr. Brooks in a low tone.

"I'm afraid it's true," replied Deacon Culver. "It looks a little as if we white

people needed some plan to redeem us, don't you think, Brooks?"

Mr. Brooks walked on for some time without answering. Then he turned toward the deacon, and said impressively: "Deacon, our social life here in Merton is in a dangerous condition. There is no use to hide the fact that we are in a serious case. Something ought to be done. I was talking to JudgeVernon last week, and to my great surprise I found that he believed as I do. He did not say much, but his few words showed plainly how deeply he felt about the matter."

The deacon sighed. He had reason to feel anxious over his own boy who was just entering college.

The two men walked on in silence. At last the deacon said: "Mr. Brooks, I shall give all I can to make Mr. Douglass's plan a success. I believe he is right when he says the best way to make Merton right, our own homes included, is to work for the

redemption of Freetown. I never felt before to-day how closely all the sins of the world are bound together. I, for one, have done very little to make any part of the city what it ought to be."

"If you say that, how much do you think I have ever done?" said Mr. Brooks with a short laugh. "At the same time, I cannot feel as you do about that plan. It is a remarkable plan in many ways, but I believe it will fail. I am willing to give something toward it, but I doubt very much if it ever amounts to anything."

The two men parted, and each went into his home thinking seriously. The conversation was, in one sense, a good example of the way in which the congregation had received the minister's plan. Some opposed it. Some had no faith in it. Some were ready at once to give money to make the plan a success. Others thought it would be a sheer waste of time and expense. Still others, however, were so surprised at the

proposed plan that they confessed to a need of more time to think it over.

At Judge Vernon's that afternoon a remarkable scene was taking place.

Claude still lay in his room, his condition unchanged. Judge Vernon, his wife, and the girls were in the next room. The doctor was talking with the family.

"There is something mysterious about this assault upon Claude," said the doctor. "The wound on his head was evidently caused by a blow from behind, but the contusion on his face might have been made by the blow of a fist directly in front of him."

"The police officers seemed to think there was no doubt that Burke Williams assaulted him," said Judge Vernon, slowly.

"They may be mistaken. They sometimes are."

"Why, who else could have done it, doctor?" exclaimed Isabel, excitedly. "We all know the colored people have done just

such things repeatedly. They are simply awful. They ought to be punished. I for one believe they were a good deal better off in slavery. It's where they belong."

"Isabel!" said Mr. Vernon.

"It's what I believe. The miserable creatures! Of what use are they?"

"I feel the same," cried Winnifred. "I think every negro in Freetown ought to be transported to Africa, so we could get Merton forever rid of them. There's no question in my mind that this wretch Williams is guilty; and, if Claude dies, he ought to be hung."

Suddenly the family was startled by a voice from the room where Claude was lying.

"Mother!" he called.

The doctor stepped into the room, followed by the rest.

Claude still lay with his eyes closed. Mrs. Vernon went up and kneeled by him. He feebly moved one of his hands. His

mother took it, and, bending her head over it, placed her lips upon it, while her tears fell fast.

"Do you know me, Claude?"

"Yes. Tell father and the rest—Burke Williams—Freetown—."

He seemed to choke for a word, and there was a moment of awful stillness in the room. They waited, but he seemed unable to speak, and lapsed into his previous condition of stupor, leaving them smitten into wonder and praying that he might be spared.

"Do you think we had better rouse him, doctor?" the judge asked after a while.

"It will do no harm. He was trying to tell us about the affair in Freetown."

They tried to rouse him from his stupor, but failed. It was growing late in the afternoon; and, as the sun went down, they all waited and prayed.

The evening service at Emmanuel Church was over, and the Rev. Howard

Douglass was just going out of the church with his wife, talking to a small group of church-members as he went, about the plan to redeem Freetown.

As they came out upon the steps, a man came walking up hastily.

"Have you heard the news?" he called out. "They have caught Burke Williams. He was hiding in a barn up in Freetown.

The little company of church people stood still. The minister looked grave.

"That is not all," said the man. "I just came by Judge Vernon's. His son died a few minutes ago."

The Rev. Howard Douglass turned to the people around him.

"Let us go back into the church and pray," he said.

They turned and entered the building. The sexton had begun to put out the lights. They kneeled in the rear of the church and prayed for the living. And over the city of Merton, in the thought of Howard Doug-

lass, as he kneeled there, the Spirit was brooding, yearning that men might listen to the words of eternal life, and turn from their sins and be redeemed.

IV.

THE CARLTON'S TROUBLE.

INEZ COMES HOME.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CARLTONS' TROUBLE.

It was two weeks after Claude Vernon's death.

The Carlton house was lighted brilliantly, and a gay card-party was in progress. The rooms were beautifully decorated with carnations. Great vases of Niphetos and Perle roses stood on the marble mantels. Festoons of costly vines were hung about the walls, and a fountain of perfumed water played in the wide hall. A band of mandolin musicians was stationed in a handsome alcove near the stairway. As one entered this richly adorned mansion, everything pleased the eye, the young people were laughing and jesting, the groups about the different tables were animated groups of happy color; and, if there was another world outside, of vice and sin and need, no hint of such a world was suggested

by the surroundings of this party of pleasure-seekers.

Yet there was a cloud on the face of the mistress of all this gayety. Mrs. Carlton herself was evidently disturbed and unhappy. Even her accustomed habit of self-control, that mask which society often compels its slaves to wear, could not conceal her real feelings.

"What is the matter, Louise?" asked one of her friends, Mrs. Lynde, as she stopped by the hostess near the staircase; "are you ill?"

"No, but I'm worried about Inez and her father. A telegram just came, saying they would be here on the one o'clock train. Of course, I feel badly about Claude, and all that. It seems almost unfortunate that the party should come so soon after, and all this other——. I feel a little nervous about it; but of course I could not foresee events."

"Of course not. You owe something to

society. This will be the event of the season."

"Do you think so?" Mrs. Carlton spoke anxiously, but her face lighted up with the selfish pleasure of a woman who has reached a point where the one great object of her life is to win the distinction of surpassing all other society leaders in social ways.

"There is no doubt of it. See if *The Sunday Caterer* does not say so." And Mrs. Lynde passed into the next room.

Mrs. Carlton looked pleased; and, as she mingled with the young people, her face seemed to lose its anxious look.

But, when the last game had been played, the refreshments served, the last guest had gone, and she was alone, she betrayed at once the unrest and excitement she had been unable to conceal during a large part of the evening.

It was half-past twelve, and she sat down in the hall reception-room, and waited for

her husband and daughter. As she sat there her mind was busy with thoughts that made her grow increasingly unhappy.

Her husband had been called abroad six months before, and had taken their only child, Inez, with him. She was nineteen years old, and had been studying art at home. When Claude Vernon died, Mrs. Carlton knew that Inez and her father were about to sail for home. Her last letter from them had come from Athens. Mrs. Carlton had not written the news of the tragedy at Judge Vernon's because she knew it would not have time to reach them before they sailed.

This was what troubled her now. It was possible that Inez and Mr. Carlton might reach home in ignorance of Claude's death. Mrs. Carlton suspected that before she went away Inez had come to have more than a girl's fancy for Claude. How far her feelings had gone the mother did not know. How severely the blow would fall

on her daughter she was unable to conjecture. But, as she looked around the elegant rooms, heavily perfumed with the evening's adornment, she could not avoid a feeling of dread at what the home-coming of the father and daughter might mean. With it all was more than a vague self-reproach that this party had followed so close upon the death of Claude Vernon.

She rose and nervously turned out the light in one of the rooms, as if to shut out the sight of the evening's gayety. She even carried several vases of roses into the library, and removed from the hallway some of the carnations that had stood there. As she came back and opened the door, feeling oppressed by the air in the house, a carriage drove up, and the travellers greeted her gayly as they came up the veranda steps.

With the first glance at her daughter, whose face she sought even before that of her husband, Mrs. Carlton knew that she was still ignorant of Claude's death.

"Why, mother, you have been having a gay time during our absence. 'When the cat's away, the mice will play'; isn't that so, father?" cried Inez, as she flung her arms about her mother, while Mr. Carlton said something with a laugh, and kissed his wife as she turned to him from her daughter's embrace.

"I've been having a little company to-night," Mrs. Carlton answered slowly. "Just a few of our friends. It was such a disappointment that you came just too late for it."

"Who has been here, mother?" asked Inez, as she put her arm about her mother and playfully drew her into the dining-room.

"Don't you and Frank want something to eat?" Mrs. Carlton desperately fought against the inevitable disclosure that must come.

"Yes, I'm hungry. We rushed every minute of the way from New York. Didn't

even take time to read the papers. What's happened since we've been away? But you have not told us who was here."

Inez, still talking, sat down at the table, and Mrs. Carlton ordered one of the servants to bring in refreshments.

Mrs. Carlton murmured over the names of several people.

Her manner was so agitated that her daughter and husband both noticed it.

"What's the matter, Louise? Are you ill?" asked her husband.

"No, but I'm very tired," exclaimed Mrs. Carlton. She was almost hysterical in her nervousness as she saw no way of escaping the dreadful news. The more she looked at Inez, the more she was struck with a new look on the girl's face. It was the look a girl would carry who had recently come to know what love is.

"Mother," Inez rattled on, "you have not given the whole list of those who were here; was, was—Claude Vernon here?"

The girl looked at her mother with a blush on her face, and then suddenly with an impulsive gesture she said, as she held her hand out over the table: "Mother, I must tell you! Father knows. Claude asked me a week before we sailed from Havre. We are engaged. We—."

She paused, seeing that in her mother's face which drove the color out of her own. Mrs. Carlton sat there in miserable silence. She hoped she might faint. She hoped for anything that would relieve her of the horror of the occasion.

"Mother!" cried Inez, "what is it?" She ran around the table, and Mr. Carlton at the same time came and supported his wife.

"O, it is too terrible! I cannot! I cannot tell it!"

"What! Is it Claude? Is anything the matter?" cried Inez, swiftly imagining evil where she loved the most.

"Yes! Yes! O, my God! O, child! Claude is—."

"He is dead!" said Inez calmly, but in a strange voice.

Mrs. Carlton threw her arms about her daughter and sobbed hysterically. When she finally recovered to realize what the news meant, Inez lay unconscious in her mother's arms. She had fainted.

Mr. Carlton took her and laid her down, and telephoned for a doctor. As he came back into the room, his wife flung her arms on the table, weeping aloud. She was unmindful of the fact that one of her hands had struck a vase of roses and upset it. The flowers lay across her arm, and the vase lay in broken fragments across the table.

It was the morning after the party at the Carlton's, and Rev. Howard Douglass was talking with his wife about the subject which now absorbed nearly all his thought.

"If we could only get the society people interested in the plan! O, if we could only

get the money that is used simply for parties and entertainments, we could carry out the plan of redeeming Freetown with every prospect of success."

He spoke anxiously, and his wife listened sympathetically.

"Now, imagine," he continued, "a woman like Mrs. Carlton, ready to throw the weight of her social influence on the side of our attempt to uplift and change Freetown. She is a leader in social circles. She has money and friends and leisure and ability. And yet she spends her time and strength in the regular round of parties and receptions year after year. The money spent on her party last night might go a long way toward building the foundation of our social-settlement hall."

"That's true," Mrs. Douglass said thoughtfully. Then after a pause she went on: Howard, somehow I have felt lately as if a change was to come over that woman's life. Have you thought that

Inez Carlton was beginning to think a good deal of Claude Vernon before she went abroad?"

"No," replied Mr. Douglass, somewhat startled.

"I have. If the girl comes home to receive the news of his death, it will change her life and her mother's possibly."

"I have never thought of such a thing. The woman seems wholly given over to her social life. It seems to me like an awful waste of God's time and money to spend them as she does all these years. If we could in some way make her see the needs of Freetown! We need money and influence to do what ought to be done over there."

He was still talking when the bell rung. He was near the stairs, on his way to his morning's work in his study.

He opened the door, and a messenger handed him a note. It read as follows:—

"*My Dear Mr. Douglass*:—Mrs. Carlton and Inez would like to see you. Can you call at the house this morning? We are in trouble. Very truly yours,

FRANK L. CARLTON."

The minister handed the note to his wife without a word.

"Perhaps the Lord is leading her in some way of his own," she said, and the words sounded in Howard Douglass's ears repeatedly as he hurried toward the Carlton mansion, not knowing why he had been summoned there.

V.

CALLERS AT MR. DOUGLASS'S.

WINIFRED AND ISABEL.

CHAPTER V.

CALLERS AT MR. DOUGLASS'S.

"Have you heard the strange news?" asked Isabel Vernon of her sister Winifred several days after that night when Inez Carlton had fainted in her mother's arms.

"No. Don't make me guess; tell me," replied Winifred, languidly. She was engaged in untying some knots in a skein of embroidery silk. Isabel had just come into the room. She looked strangely excited.

"Did you know that Claude was engaged to Inez while she was abroad?"

Winifred dropped her work on the floor. Her face trembled, and her whole manner showed excitement.

"I knew he cared a good deal for her. But not that way."

"He did. I have been to see Inez. But that is not the strange news I have to tell."

Isabel showed the marks of the recent

death of Claude. She trembled while she spoke, and her face was pale and drawn.

"Inez and her mother are going to help Mr. Douglass in his work in Freetown!"

"What?"

"Inez told me so this morning. She—she wants us to help her."

There was a silence in the room. Winifred clasped her hands together and her lips trembled with inward passion.

"Does she know that Claude was probably killed by that—that awful wretch in Freetown?"

"I don't know. I suppose she has heard. I could not talk with her. Mrs. Carlton is not the same woman. It is all so horribly queer. I do not understand it."

"What do they intend to do?" asked Winifred, vaguely.

"O, I don't know. They are going to help Mr. Douglass build that social-settlement hall he talks so much about. I don't like to think of it."

"How did Inez look?" asked Winifred, after a little.

"O, I don't know. Don't ask me. The whole thing is dreadful."

"Do you think she cared very much for Claude?"

"What do *you* think, when she is ready to work for the people that caused his death?"

Winifred shuddered and Isabel was silent. Neither of them could think or talk of Claude's death without a feeling of repulsion toward everything connected with the work in Freetown.

That same evening Howard Douglass was going over the details of his plan with his wife.

"Now that Mrs. Carlton has offered to help, we can begin at once on the social-settlement hall."

"It is like a story. Who would have thought that Mrs. Carlton would ever offer to do such a thing?"

Mr. Douglass thoughtfully spread some papers out over the table, and then wrote something before he spoke.

"Yes, it is simply a miracle of changes in her case and that of Miss Inez. Mrs. Carlton has offered to give two thousand dollars toward the building. I have suggested that she use her influence to get other society people in Merton to have a share in the work. In fact, the redemption of Freetown ought to be a part of the whole city's life. The work to be done is so large that no one church or person or organization can do it. If we can only get the help of all the people who have means, we can do wonders in Freetown."

There was silence again as the minister wrote. Presently he looked up and said, "Do you want to hear the plan as I have it on paper?"

Before his wife could answer the bell rung. The minister started to say something about so many interruptions just

when he was busiest. The minister was a man, and therefore not quite perfect yet. His wife gave him a look that seemed to remind him of something, and a smile broke out over his face.

"Maybe it's angels unawares," she said, as she walked toward the door.

"Maybe it is, Mary. Don't you think their visits are very few and far between?" said the minister. But he was good-natured as he opened the door.

The sight of the people who stood outside startled him.

"We don't wonder that you are surprised," said Judge Vernon. "The fact is, that we are a little surprised at ourselves. But we all seemed to reach your door at the same time without knowing that the others were coming; and, if I'm not mistaken, we have all come on the same errand."

"Come in," said the minister somewhat bewildered. And there came into the

house Judge Vernon, the Hon. William Brooks, Deacon Culver and Mr. Carlton.

When they had greeted Mrs. Douglass and were seated, Judge Vernon said gravely, "I came to see Mr. Douglass about the work in Freetown."

"That is what I came for," said the other men in turn. The minister looked bewildered yet. It was so seldom that anybody ever came voluntarily to see him about doing anything of that sort that he hardly knew what to say. The last men in the city he expected to see, with the exception of his deacon, were the three men who were now in his house. Judge Vernon had never called on him. The Hon. William Brooks was a shrewd politician and an able lawyer, but his connection with the Emmanuel Church had never gone any further than attendance on services and financial support. Mr. Carlton was almost a stranger, and belonged to another denomination. So the Rev. Howard

Douglass might be excused if he looked and felt somewhat surprised.

But he was able to enjoy the unexpected co-operation of these men, and in a few minutes they were all in the midst of a great discussion over the minister's plan.

"In brief," the minister was saying at the close of an hour's talk, "the plan includes:—

"1. A building constructed on purpose for the work we need to do. This will cost anywhere from two thousand to three thousand dollars.

"2. This building must be equipped for kindergarten work. It must contain a day-nursery for the babies of mothers who are obliged to go away from home all day to labor, a kitchen where cooking can be taught, bath-rooms, a reading-room, smaller rooms for classes in sewing or music, a dispensary, an office, and a basement fitted for teaching trades.

"3. The plan also includes a list of premiums or prizes given to the people of Freetown to encourage neatness, thrift, and industry. These prizes are to be offered for the best gardens, the finest individual collection of vegetables, the neatest-looking front and back yard and alley, the neatest interior of a house, the best flower-beds, the largest and best fruit-garden, and the most improvements on any place in a year.

"4. The plan also includes the establishment of regular Sunday work, a Sunday school, preaching services, good music, and distribution of good reading matter at the houses during the afternoon.

"5. To make the plan succeed, we must have money enough to endow the institution. It must be permanent in its character in order to produce results. As much money must be put into it as put into a business of any sort where we expect to get large results. Over $50,000,000 are invested in the bicycle industry in the United

States. The redemption of Freetown is of much more importance to the human race than all the bicycles in the world. It is useless to expect to lift up the people over there unless we can get and use large sums of money. I have estimated that it will take from $2,000 to $3,000 a year to maintain the work in Freetown on a successful basis.

"6. The last point in the plan is the most important."

The minister paused in his reading, and looked around at the three men. They were all very much interested, and Judge Vernon and Mr. Carlton seemed to be specially excited. Mr. Douglass went on.

"What is absolutely necessary to the success of this plan is the voluntary residence in the heart of Freetown of some of the best men and women in Merton. That is, the house must contain, all the year around, Christian men and women who are willing to live for certain weeks or

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months with the work, direct it from the centre, and give their talents, their strength, their wisdom, personally to a solution of the terrible problems over there. We can get money to build the house; we can get premiums to carry out our plans for encouraging industry; we can get enough money, probably, to endow the work.

"The question now is, Can we get *people*, the best and best-known, and most able to go over there and live with the people? That, to my mind, is the heart of the problem. When the Christian world is willing to give itself to the redemption of the unchristian world, it will be redeemed. When Christian Merton is willing to give itself for unchristian Freetown, it will be redeemed. The question really is, How many of the best men and women are ready to go and live for a while in that house?

"Here in Merton are hundreds of men

and women who spend night after night in parties, amusing themselves; how many of them will take that time to help redeem a part of the city? Here in Merton are scores of able, capable men who spend hours in political discussions or in attendance on political gatherings; how many of them will do anything personally to help restore lost souls? Here in Merton are hundreds of young people who have health and ambition and high aims; how many of them will suffer personally to relieve suffering? What is needed in this work is not a few weak, uneducated, unequipped good people, but the best we have in the social and literary and political life of Merton.

"There is no question in my mind that the success of the whole plan will depend on the kind of people who are willing to go and live in the social settlement and, by their living, personal presence, touch at close quarters the sin and misery and

crime of that lost part of our city. The question is, Who will go?"

Mr. Carlton had not said a word since the first greeting. He spoke now in a voice that showed great emotion. The rest leaned forward and listened eagerly. Over them all the Spirit of God brooded in eager expectation.

VI.

SOME MOMENTOUS DECISIONS.

WILL YOU LIVE THERE YOURSELF?" THE MINISTER ASKED

CHAPTER VI.

SOME MOMENTOUS DECISIONS.

"We are ready to live in the settlement house," said Mr. Carlton slowly; "Mrs. Carlton, Inez, and myself."

His announcement was received by the others in perfect silence.

At last Judge Vernon spoke in a tone that revealed very strong emotion. "It may not be possible for all of us to do as Mr. Carlton has decided. Not all the people in Merton can become residents in Freetown. But I came here to-night to say this: I will reside in the house a part of the time and give my personal attention to whatever part of the work over there I can help most."

Again there was silence. The Rev. Howard Douglass said afterwards that all during that evening's experience he felt so astonished at the unexpected volunteers

for the work that he was like one who sees things in a dream.

The Hon. William Brooks had listened with head bent and a look of strange hesitation on his face. He now lifted his head, and looked directly at the minister.

"Mr. Douglass, the Sunday that you spoke about this plan for redeeming Freetown I walked home with Deacon Culver here, and in a talk with him I criticised the plan and expressed my doubts as to its success. I came here to-night to offer my services to make your plan a success. You are entirely right when you say that money alone cannot do this work. You are right when you say that people must go and live there themselves."

He stopped suddenly, and the Rev. Howard Douglass returned his look, while the color rose in each man's face.

"Will you live there yourself?" The minister asked it as if the other man had compelled the question. Indeed, he said

afterward that it seemed absolutely necessary to make Mr. Brooks commit himself directly on that point.

No one spoke for a moment. The stillness was deep and full of meaning.

"Yes, I will," said the voice of the lawyer at last. Probably he had never spoken three words that cost more or meant more to a large number of souls.

No one spoke again for a moment. There seemed to be a tension in every man's mind, but a great hesitation to expel it with the spoken thought. Deacon Culver said at last: "Mrs. Culver and I will do our part. I am fully in sympathy with the pastor's plan."

"Mrs. Douglass and I have decided our course. We will make our home for the time in the settlement. I need hardly say that we are deeply moved by this unexpected beginning of the work. The Spirit of God has certainly moved all your hearts. I have been guilty of questioning God's

power. What I have heard to-night shows me that nothing is too hard for him." The minister's voice trembled; and, as he looked into the faces of those men, he felt that the victory of good over evil was possible. He saw already the redemption of Freetown a reality.

They sat long together, and talked over details of the plan. The longer they counselled together, the more convinced they all felt that the work they were about to do was a work of such tremendous power and value that it could not be measured by money or mental effort.

During the conference it became evident that the same influences had been moving those men to decide their relation to the social settlement. The tragedy in Judge Vernon's house had affected him profoundly. He read in the events which had led to his son's death the lesson of personal responsibility for the redemption of Freetown. It was learned long afterwards that

Mr. and Mrs. Carlton and Inez had made the complete change in their lives through the effect of that tragic incident on Inez. No power of man could ever have wrought so complete and astonishing change. The divine Spirit had moved their hearts and made them new creatures. The Hon. William Brooks had reasoned himself to a logical acceptance of the minister's plan; and then, tired of the indifference and selfishness of an observer of human wretchedness who criticises others, he had suddenly determined to give himself, where for so many years he had simply given his opinions. But although he himself did not acknowledge it at the time, he also was led by the same Spirit which can make proud men yield themselves and enter the Kingdom as a little child.

During the next few days the city of Merton experienced a sensation when it was told the news of that meeting at the house of the Rev. Howard Douglass. There

was nothing very remarkable in the fact that Mr. Douglass and Deacon Culver had promised to go and live a part of the time in the social settlement. But when it became known that Judge Vernon, Mr. Carlton, and the Hon. William Brooks expected to work in Freetown, and actually take up their residence a part of the time in the house, everybody exclaimed in wonder.

Perhaps the best idea of the way in which the people of Merton regarded the facts may be obtained from a conversation that occurred at one of the society events that winter.

It was in the house of Mrs. James Lewis, the wife of one of the railroad officials. Mrs. Lewis was president of the United Clubs of the women of Merton. Her influence in the city was second only to that of Mrs. Carlton. The two women, each in her own circle, had been leaders for many years. Mrs. Lewis was very literary, and

had a talent for organization. The United Clubs often gave a series of lectures by well-known women speakers. Once every winter they met at the house of Mrs. Lewis for a reception. It was this event that was the scene of a spirited discussion over the news of Mr. Douglass's plan and its unexpected volunteers.

"The plan is simply absurd," said the wife of one of the editors of *The Daily News*. "It is one of those things that belong to dreams, but have no place in practical life."

"But still, some of the best things in the world come from the people who have visions. Do you remember what Mrs. Garnet said in her last lecture? 'The ideal in life is always preceded by the visionary. Some one must dream before any one will act.' There is a great truth at the heart of that social settlement."

There was a pause for a moment in the room where the discussion was going on.

Before it was broken, Mrs. Lewis came to the door.

"Mrs. Lewis, what do you think of it?" asked the editor's wife.

"You are discussing Mr. Douglass's plan for redeeming Freetown? I overheard a part of it. I'll tell you. He has been to see me about it. Shall I tell what he asks us to do?"

"By all means!" exclaimed an excited chorus of voices.

"He wants the United Clubs of Merton to work for an endowment fund, so that the social settlement will become a permanent institution."

There was silence a moment. The women looked expressively at one another.

"That isn't what we are organized to do," finally said one of the ladies.

"Wholly outside of our sphere. We are neither a charity nor a church organization."

"It will break up our meetings for lit-

erary culture if we turn aside to do benevolent work."

"But still," said another voice from a sweet-faced woman who had not yet spoken, "still, isn't it a pity that we should get together so often year after year simply to study the Greeks and Romans and the arts and the sciences, and never study the city in which we live, its needs, its conditions, its degradation? It is possible we are not studying the most important things of life in our clubs."

Mrs. Lewis looked at the speaker thoughtfully. "I have been thinking of that also." Every one in the room looked surprised. Mrs. Lewis went on: "We could raise a great deal of money in our clubs if we once determined to share in this redemption of Freetown."

"We might change the name of our club to the United Missionary Society," said a sarcastic voice. "I beg to be ex-

cused, ladies, if you are going to take up Freetown and try to reform it."

"Look at Mrs. Carlton and Inez," said another. "Isn't that a seven days' wonder?"

"No greater than Mr. Brooks or Judge Vernon. The judge must be made of strange material."

"I was talking with Isabel—."

"But, ladies," cried Mrs. Lewis, "what do you think we ought to do about the matter of helping Mr. Douglass?"

"What do *you* think?"

"I am in favor of it. What have we ever done as a club for the real uplift of the city where it needs the most help? We have a membership in the United Clubs of nearly one thousand members. If each of us gave one dollar, that would go a long way toward supporting the social settlement for a year."

Again there was an expressive silence. There was assent on some faces, disapproval

on others. Mrs. Lewis was about to go on, when she was suddenly called out of the room. The discussion continued after she was gone. It grew more animated throughout the afternoon and evening. The social settlement in Freetown became the one exciting theme of conversation. There was one large element that seemed ready to go with the president and pledge the United Clubs to the support of the work. There was another decided group of women who refused to entertain the idea of making such a radical change in the programme of regular club-life.

When the reception was over and every one had gone home, it was entirely uncertain whether Mrs. Lewis would be able to use her influence to persuade the United Clubs to take an active part in the work of redeeming Freetown. Mrs. Lewis sat very thoughtful in her house that evening. Several times she said to herself: "O, we might, we ought. Surely we are not using

our time and our strength to the highest advantage." But, after all, she was unable to tell whether her influence was strong enough to carry the majority of the clubs with her.

Meanwhile, the prisoner Burke Williams had been awaiting in the county jail the carrying out of the sentence which condemned him to the penitentiary for twenty years. According to the common law in the case, he would be obliged to serve out the time for his first offence before being tried for the second. But various plans had been tried to surprise him into confessing the crime of Claude Vernon's murder, and he was detained in the county jail beyond the regular time.

He was still in his cell, sullen and silent. The sheriff had at last made his plans to convey the prisoner to the State prison on the day when Judge Vernon was sitting in a case where another negro from Freetown

was under trial for a serious offence against the State.

Judge Vernon sat there pale and stern. His emotions were conflicting. The man on trial again represented the lost part of the city, and every time he looked at his stolid, brutal face the judge saw the face of the other man, and pictured him on his way to his twenty years' confinement. Could such a spot as Freetown be redeemed? Was it possible to save such souls as these? The courtroom was crowded. The bailiff had just arisen to proclaim the opening of court. Suddenly, near the door, an unusual disturbance was noticeable. It grew in volume. All eyes were turned in that direction. Judge Vernon half rose from his seat; and the large audience, lawyers, officers, and spectators, seemed to feel as by a united wave of intelligence that something very remarkable had happened.

VII.

REDEMPTION BEGUN.

"BURKE WILLIAMS'S CASE HAS BEEN CALLED UP TO A HIGHER COURT."

CHAPTER VII.

REDEMPTION BEGUN.

The confusion by the door of the courtroom increased. A word was passed from lip to lip. Faces grew pale. The word went out over the waiting spectators, and reached the bar and the county attorney.

The attorney rose, and, lifting his arm, he solemnly said, while the confusion suddenly ceased: "Your honor, Burke Williams's case has been called up to a higher court. He has committed suicide!"

Judge Vernon grasped the desk in front of him, and for a moment the courtroom swam before him in confusion. He recovered himself, but the excitement was so great and the tension on his emotions so strong that he was compelled to adjourn court for the day. As he passed out of the room, the lawyers and spectators quietly made way for him. His recent experiences

had given him an added dignity that all men respected.

The prisoner had hanged himself to one of the bars of his cell. He had left no confession. The mystery of Claude Vernon's death remained a mystery so far as any actual proof was obtained, and the prisoner himself had gone to meet the Judge of all the earth, to be judged for the deeds done in the body. What that judgment is, only the last great day can disclose.

The news of the suicide stirred the people of Merton deeply.

The whole affair, together with Howard Douglass's plan and its reception by so many prominent people, called attention to Freetown as it had never been called during the history of the city. For several days it was the absorbing topic of conversation. People all over the city discussed the situation. One of the most interesting discussions was held by the Christian Endeavor

society of the Emanuel Church a week after the suicide.

It was a regular business session, and after the reports had been received, the president rose and said he wanted to present the case of Freetown to the society.

"Mr. Douglass will be here before we finish, but it seemed to me it would be a good thing if we could let him know something definite that we can pledge to do to help the work. Some of us have been talking over the work for several weeks, and I think we are ready to submit a line of suggestions which the society can follow out if it thinks best."

"I make a motion," said one of the members who was a college student and always wanted business to proceed in accordance with Cushing's "Manual of Parliamentary Practice," "that we pledge ourselves as a society to help in the work at Freetown in every way we can. We can discuss plans in detail before passing the motion."

The motion was seconded by half a dozen eager voices.

"Now for suggestions," said the president.

The chairman of the Christian-citizenship committee rose.

"Our committee has held several meetings within the past month, and we have agreed that we might do some good work in the settlement house by having meetings to instruct the voters in Freetown along the line of municipal politics. We could have classes in the history of political movements, take up the city government, discuss the best plans for electing the best men, etc. This plan has already been tried in several social settlements with great success. Our committee pledges itself to help in this way."

He sat down, and some one started a little applause. It swept through the room, and ceased only when the chairman of the good-literature committee rose.

"Our committee is ready to fit up the new reading-room in the social settlement with magazines, papers, and books. Besides that, we beliee we can carry good papers to the different houses in Freetown, and direct the reading by means of reading-circles, especially in the winter. Our main object, however, will be to help make the new reading-room attractive, and to serve as librarians or attendants different evenings during the week, if Mr. Douglass says that is the best way to serve."

"Any other suggestions?" asked the president, as no one spoke for a moment.

The chairman of the lookout committee rose slowly. He was one of the oldest members of the society and a good worker, but talking was hard work for him.

"Several members of our committee think the cooking-classes in Freetown are going to be very necessary. Referred to the other members of the committee; the rest of them are girls."

He sat down amid applause. There were cries for one or two of the other members of the committee.

"It's true!" said a tall, energetic-looking girl, as she rose and spoke very decidedly. "It makes a great difference with the morals of people what they eat. And some of us girls think the best thing we could do to help in the social settlement will be to volunteer our services as cooks in the housekeeping department, and teach the colored girls there the best ways, and help fit them for service. You needn't laugh, because some of us *can* cook. Our mothers have taught us how. And we are ready to do our share."

She sat down amid a generous clapping of hands, and in the midst of it Mr. Douglass walked in.

"I think we are ready to hear from our pastor now," said the president, as Mr. Douglass sat down near him.

"No; go on, and let me know what you

have been doing," said the minister. He looked tired, but his face brightened as he looked over the room and saw the faces of the young people. There was inspiration in the life there.

The president gave an outline of the work suggested by the committee. "It is only a beginning of what we can do, I'm sure," the president said in conclusion; "but we want to be of use, and we are ready to learn."

"Thank God!" cried Howard Douglas to himself softly, while his eyes filled with tears. "'For Christ and the church' Why, we can turn the world out of the hand of evil into the arms of good if we only have enough volunteer service like this."

He stayed a long time, talking over plans with the society; and, when he finally walked home, he carried in his heart a great encouragement that in the coming fight for souls in Freetown he had for helpers

the united, enthusiastic, whole-hearted service of his society.

The next few weeks saw the history of the new movement made very fast.

One of the daily papers of Merton volunteered to receive money for an endowment fund, and even agreed to publish a series of articles on social settlements, in order to awaken interest in the movement and show that they were of practical value in the solution of great human problems. The series was actually printed and eagerly read by the subscribers. It was so popular that the editor followed it up with another series on the proposed plan to redeem Freetown, accompanied by sketches of the building, a description of its general plan, and a detailed account of the premium list for the best houses and gardens in the district.

The whole city became profoundly interested as the time drew near for the completion of the settlement house and its oc-

cupation by the volunteer residents. Perhaps no one event had ever stirred social circles as this one. Mrs. Carlton's influence had been very large. So far, her example in the way of financial help for the settlement had not been imitated by any other society people. The winter had been a very gay one. Even Claude Vernon's tragic death and Inez Carlton's sad experience had not made any lasting impression on the pleasure-seekers of Merton. Does an address at a funeral ever convert any one? It is a question whether, out of all the social acquaintance that Inez had, another girl was ready to give up her regular life of amusement to do or to be anything different for the sake of helping suffering humanity. They all wondered at Inez. She moved among them, quiet, reserved, the dignity of a great sorrow suddenly acquired adding to the sweetness of her character; but she was not like the Inez her once intimate friends had known. No-

thing develops deep character like sorrow, if the hand of God is allowed to soothe and elevate it. And nothing is so selfish as sorrow when God is shut out of a wounded heart.

There was nevertheless, all through society a great feeling of curiosity to know how the Carlton's, Judge Vernon, Mr. Brooks, and the minister's family would manage the affairs of the social settlement, and what the effects of their actual living there would be on the people of Freetown.

In addition to this, the probable action of the United Clubs of the women of Merton was still undecided. Would Mrs. Lewis be able to secure the help of a majority of the clubs in assisting the financial side of the work? It was a question. No one could answer it yet. Howard Douglass, with a faith in future gifts for the work, went on with the building. He had secured from various sources, notably from the churches of Merton, enough money to

warrant the care of the settlement work for a year. What it needed, however, was a permanent endowment. If Mrs. Lewis succeeded in enlisting the co-operation of all the clubs, that endowment was practically assured. But when the building was finally completed and ready for its residents, the United Clubs had not yet decided their course.

Merton will never forget that day of the dedication of Freetown social settlement. Freetown was stirred up as by the hand of God. Howard Douglass and his wife, Judge Vernon, the Carltons, Mr. Brooks, Mrs. Lewis, the newspaper editors, the representative business men, the ministers of the other churches, the leaders in social circles even, crowded into the beautiful hall of the settlement that day.

Howard Douglass arose to offer the dedicatory prayer after the preliminary exercises had passed. He prayed that the place where the building now stood might be re-

deemed, brought back, saved for God. Would his prayer be answered? Could Freetown be redeemed? The great audience was swayed by one feeling, and through the room, as the prayer went on, a breath of the divine Spirit swept, and all hearts present felt its beneficent benediction.

VIII.

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER.

"AS HE REACHED THE CORNER HE STOPPED AND LOOKED BACK."

CHAPTER VIII.

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER.

Mr. Alfred Harris, member of the Associated Press Bureau, to Walter R. Stoddard, editor of the Boston Message:—

MERTON, FEB. 12, 1914.

"*My Dear Stoddard*:—I was sent here, as you know, to write up the social settlement in Freetown; and I have done the best I could, and am ready to start West to-morrow. But I feel tempted to let you know something in this letter that I did not feel like putting into my report.

"Merton is a city of about 50,000 people, a railroad center, and a place of good residence and business life.

"Fifteen years ago a district known as Freetown, settled by negroes, had the reputation of being the source of more crime

and social trouble than any other part of the city. The son of one of the district court judges was found one night unconscious, wounded, and robbed in this district. It was supposed at the time that he was assaulted by a criminal by the name of Williams, who committed suicide while in jail. This was afterward proved to be false; as I shall speak of this later on, I will not go into the details of it here.

"What I wanted to write about particularly was the personality of the social-settlement work now finally established in Freetown.

"Rev. Howard Douglass and his church (the Emanuel) proposed the building of a house in Freetown where some of the most prominent families in Merton agreed to live during all or part of the time, for the express purpose of redeeming the place from sin and fitting it up into a transformed human life.

"It is not exaggerating the facts to say

that what was planned fifteen years ago has been carried out with the most remarkable results. Let me tell you a little about them.

"First, there was the building itself, built largely by the gifts of Mrs. Carlton, who had been a social leader in Merton for many years. Her original gift was three thousand dollars. She afterwards increased it to five thousand. The building contained a large kindergarten and assembly hall, a house-keeping department, a reading-room, a dispensary, a nursery, bath-rooms, and rooms for sewing and industrial work, and physical culture and music rooms. There have been some changes in the original plan of the house, but it has remained practically the same as when first built. I ought not to forget the rooms provided for residents who take up their stay in the house on a co-operative plan that has so far worked very satisfactory.

"You will be interested to know some-

thing about the work done in this house. The kindergarten has been, perhaps, the central force of the establishment. Nothing has been so valuable in lasting results. A volume might be written about it. No one in Merton any longer questions the value of the kindergarten in the redemption of Freetown.

"The housekeeping department has resulted in the increased number of faithful, competent cooks and servants who have been trained in the house. It is the common rule now, so I was told, for the graduates of the cooking and housekeeping classes in Freetown to be sought by the best families in the city; and these servants have even set the standard of prices for the best servants, and command higher wages than any other girls in Merton who go out to service. If the social settlement has not done anything else, it would be a great blessing to the housekeepers of Merton.

It has helped to solve a large part of the servant-girl problem in this city.

"The children's nursery has been a wonderful blessing to the mothers of Freetown. The mother who goes out to wash or work all day can leave her baby at the settlement and go off, knowing it will be cared for even better than the mother herself could do it. Formerly, many a child was shut up in a cabin with other children only a little older, or turned out into the street to play; and it was a wonder that more of them did not die. As it was, many babies used to grow up miserably neglected, and suffering was common and harmful.

"I did not mean to describe so particularly the details of the work done by the settlement, but I have been so astonished by what I have seen that I do not know where to stop when I once begin to write.

"I must mention one regular feature of the Freetown work; that is, the premium

list for physical improvement of the place.

"Premiums are offered every year for the best gardens, best-looking yard. finest flower-beds, neatest interior of cabin, most fruit on a place, most improvements during the season, etc.

"You would be astonished to see what has been done along this line. Unsightly yards, dirty alleys, shiftless cabins, are a thing of the past. One of the prettiest parts of Merton is Freetown. The parks in front of the houses are arranged in original designs of flowers; the yards are ablaze with roses; and shade-trees, fruit-trees, vines, and lawns have so transformed the district that it is a favorite drive for Merton people to pass through Freetown. All this may seem impossible, but I believe you will see how it is within the reach of human effort when I tell you a little more about how it has all been secured.

"In the first place, some of the most prominent people in Merton have actually

lived in this settlement house, and have given their time and their strength and their brains to the actual redemption of the place. For instance, there is Judge Vernon, whose son I mentioned. He has been a resident a part of the time. It had been his custom once a year, before the settlement house was built, to go off with two or three old college class-mates on a month's hunt or camping expedition. He has frequently, in past years, given that amount of time to residence in the settlement. He told me that his service there had proved as full of recreation and stimulus as any of his previous vacations. He is a man of great influence because of his character and position, and his example has been a wonderful one for other men in Merton.

"By the way, I meant to tell you that it was found several years after his son's death that the negro, Williams, who it was supposed was the cause of it, was innocent.

A confession made by one of Claude Vernon's social acquaintances disclosed the fact that on the way home that night he quarrelled with another companion, while both were under the influence of liquor, and blows were exchanged with fatal results to Judge Vernon's son. His companion shielded himself behind the bad reputation of the negro, and revealed the facts only on his own deathbed.

"I mention this because it had a good deal to do with the change in public opinion towards Freetown on the part of many families, notably the judge's own. His married daughters, Isabel and Winifred, I have met once or twice. They belong to the fashionable society here, and I suppose have no great sympathy with the unusual interest taken by their father in the Freetown work.

"The Carlton family is another remarkable help to the work done by the settlement. Father, mother, and daughter have

been for the most part permanent residents. Miss Inez is a beautiful young woman of great force of character. She has made her life-work the redemption of the place. Mrs. Carlton has given much money to the work; but that is a small thing by the side of her own personal attention to the work itself. I was struck repeatedly with the unusual charm of her manner, and wondered that a woman of such social distinction as she evidently was had been willing to live in such surroundings. Her daughter also impresses every one in the same way.

"Mr. Douglass, pastor of the Emmanuel Church, has, with his wife and family, lived in the house a part of the time. He has been obliged to work out the problem of the residence in connection with his own church work. His church heartily stood by him, notably his Christian Endeavor society, which has furnished during these years some of the best material in the city for residents. The young man who was presi-

dent of the society the year the settlement house was built is now the head resident, and manages the business of the house when Mr. Douglass is absent.

"One of the most helpful residents has been Mr. Brooks, a well-known lawyer of Merton. He has given a large part of his time and money to make the settlement powerful for good.

"Another important fact has made the redemption of Freetown possible. The work has been well endowed. A short time after the dedication of the house, Mrs. Lewis, president of the United Clubs of the women of Merton, succeeded in gaining the co-operation of a majority of the clubs to work for an endowment fund to place the settlement on a firm basis. This work of the clubs has been very successful. Instead of meeting for entertainments, receptions, parties, or ethical and literary discussions, the women of fashion and social power have met to work for a humanity

that was in more need of being redeemed than they themselves were of being improved in their minds, and the result has justified the effort. The Freetown social settlement is a permanent enterprise because it is so thoroughly established on a firm financial basis.

"I ought not to omit mention of the churches of Merton, which have also, without regard to denomination, helped the settlement all these years in many generous ways. In fact, nearly all the Sunday work there is done by members of the different churches and Christian Endeavor societies. This has been a wonderful aid to unite the denominations.

"The political aspect of Freetown has been completely transformed by the political school formed by the Christian citizenship committees of the Endeavor societies. This alone would necessarily prove of untold value to the city.

"Fifteen years seems like a compara-

tively short time to redeem a place such as Freetown was. But it is the personal life going into the heart of the great need that has done it. Don't you think it is because Christian people do not generally do their work on a large enough scale that the results are so small? It is because so many prominent people here, people of wealth and mental ability and social influence, have been willing to give their lives to the redemption of Freetown that it has been redeemed. I do not mean, of course, that everything is all right in Freetown. But in a very true sense it has been redeemed. And it is no miracle, unless we call love for lost souls a miracle. If you are in doubt about all this, come out here and look for yourself. Mr. Douglass has just called to take me over to see the exercises in the kindergarten hall in honor of Lincoln's birthday.

"Very truly yours,

"ALFRED HARRIS."

An hour later Mr. Alfred Harris came out of the hall. He shook hands with Mr. Douglas and the other residents, and started down the street. It was his last day in Merton.

As he reached the corner, he stopped and looked back. The children came out of the hall, and were standing about the minister and his wife. Inez Carlton and her mother were standing on the steps just above the group. The whole scene impressed the newspaper man profoundly.

An elderly man touched his arm.

"It's been worth while, don't you think?"

"O, it's you, Mr. Brooks. 'Worth while!' I should say so. Why cannot the same thing be done in every city where the need is as great?"

"It can, if——," the lawyer paused thoughtfully a moment.

"If——," said Mr. Alfred Harris, looking gravely at the lawyer.

"If the world will give itself to redeem itself."

He went on toward the settlement, and the other man went his way with his head bent in reverie. Somehow he seemed to hear the words borne to him from the settlement, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."

Ah, yes! Shall the world ever be redeemed in any other way?

"And they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, '*God with us.*'"

THE END.